

V. I. Lenin

[The Seventh \(April\) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. \(B.\)](#)

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Speech on the National Question

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Comrade Lenin recalled that the Polish Social-Democrats were against the right to national self-determination in 1903, when the question was not raised in the prospect of a socialist revolution. The specific character of their stand on the national question is due to their peculiar position in Poland; the tsarist oppression fed the nationalistic passions of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sections of Poland.

The Polish Social-Democrats had to go through a desperate struggle against the “socialists” (P.P.S) who were even prepared to have a European war for the sake of Poland’s liberation, and only they, the Polish Social-Democrats, spreading the feelings of international solidarity among the Polish workers, led them closer to the workers of Russia.

However, their attempt to impose a rejection of the right to self-determination on the socialists of the *oppressor* nations is **extremely erroneous** and in the event of success could result in nothing more than the adoption of a chauvinistic stand by the Russian Social-Democrats. By rejecting the oppressed nations’ right to self-determination, the socialists of the oppressor nations become chauvinists, giving support to their own bourgeoisie.

Russian socialists must work to secure *freedom to secede* for the oppressed nations, while the socialists of the oppressed nations must maintain freedom to integrate, both taking formally different (essentially the same) ways towards the same goal: **the international organisation of the proletariat.**

Those who say that the national question has been solved within the bourgeois system tend to forget that it has been solved (but not in every case) only in the west of Europe, where the purity of the population is sometimes as high as 90 per cent, but not in the east, where the purity of the population is limited to only 43 per cent.

Finland’s example shows that the national question is in practice on the order of the day and that the alternative is support for the imperialist bourgeoisie or the duty of international solidarity, which does not allow of any violation of the will of the oppressed nations. The Mensheviks, who invited the Finnish Social-Democrats to “wait” until the Constituent Assembly and settle the question of autonomy *together* with it, actually spoke out in the spirit of the Russian imperialists.

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